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ABSTRACT

This report on a preconference symposium held July 31, 1979 presents recommendations developed to interpret the conference theme of library and information services for increasing international understanding. Five discussion groups were organized to consider (1) the current status of international information flow, (2) overcoming barriers to international information flow, (3) impact of current technology on international information exchange, (4) economic aspects of international information exchange, and (5) uses and users of information internationally. The reports from each group include issues, recommendations, and commentary. An overview of findings emphasizes improvement of information flow to less developed countries, coordination of U.S. information policies with world-wide developments, creation of a mechanism for coordinating U.S. information policies, improvement of domestic acquisition of foreign materials, assessment of the impact of technology on the availability of information, and improvement of standards for facilitating information flow. The transcript of a speech in which Thomas R. Pickering discusses international information policy conflicts is appended. (SW)

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The Library of Congress
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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES PRECONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE

WASHINGTON, D.C.
JULY 31, 1979

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION..... 1

CHAPTER TWO: SUMMARIES OF DISCUSSION GROUP FINDINGS..... 11

I. DISCUSSION GROUP 1: OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT STATE OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION FLOW..... 11

II. DISCUSSION GROUP 2: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION FLOW..... 14

III. DISCUSSION GROUP 3: IMPACT OF CURRENT TECHNOLOGY ON INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE..... 16

IV. DISCUSSION GROUP 4: ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE..... 18

V. DISCUSSION GROUP 5: USES AND USERS OF INFORMATION INTERNATIONALLY..... 21

CHAPTER THREE: OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS..... 24

APPENDIX: LUNCHEON SPEECH BY THOMAS R. PICKERING..... 28

The information age is greeted by all of us with expectancy and hope, but expectancy and hope that are tempered with concern that the opportunities of the information age should not be lost by failure to predict and take into account its consequences...Several issues involve fundamental values of morality and individual liberty, of national pride, and of national sovereignty which are factors in the regulation and control of information processing and exchange. These issues of the information age justify a strong national commitment to international discussion and open debate.

Thomas R. Pickering
Assistant Secretary of State,
Bureau of Oceans and International
Environmental and Scientific
Affairs

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In authorizing the White House Conference on Library and Information Services, the United States Congress stressed that "access to information and ideas is indispensable to the development of human potential, the advancement of civilization, and the continuance of enlighted self-government." As the designers of the conference reflected upon its rationale, as set forth in Public Law 93-568, and the more than 3,000 recommendations developed during 56 State, territorial, and special preconference sessions, it became apparent that there were international dimensions to the library and information services being utilized by American citizens.

As consideration was given to incorporating the ideas and issues expressed throughout the country into a workable program structure, the concept of treating five major theme areas emerged. After intensive deliberation, these conference themes--each with a series of related issues--were expressed as library and information services for:

- meeting personal needs
- enhancing lifelong learning
- improving organizations and the professions
- effectively governing our society
- increasing international understanding

The initial step in determining which areas that were concerned with international information exchange should be addressed at the main conference was to convene a planning meeting at the National Academy of Sciences (NAS), on May 22, 1979. The thrust of this session was to focus upon a number of candidate activities and issues which might then be prioritized and prepared as program elements for the White House Conference. Following the admonition by Charles Benton, Chairman of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, that "we cannot disucss library and information services as if they stopped at our national borders," a series of brief presentations provided essential information on existing international information activities.

First, an overview of international organizations and programs was presented by Judith Werdel of the National Academy of Science's Commission on International Relations. Included in her discussion was useful information on the goals and objectives for U.S. involvement in international S&T information activities that was developed by the NAS Commission on International Scientific and Technical Information Programs (CISTIP), and insight into how U.S. information professionals and organizations participate in international information activities.

The second report, by Dr. Valdimir Slamecka of the Georgia Institute of Technology, focussed on two sets of issues. One

dealt with the United States computer and communications industries and the problems inherent in their competition with similar foreign groups; the second was concerned with information as a resource which needs to have a value placed upon it within the international marketplace.

Dr. David Hersey, President of the Smithsonian Science Information Exchange, then talked about the role of the private sector in international information flows. He noted that private industry, unwilling to wait on often slow government activities, has undertaken its own efforts to make library and information resources available outside the United States. Among these offerings were requisite hardware, software, training programs, and specific data bases. Another major point made by Dr. Hersey emphasized the need for a more balanced flow of information between the U.S. and other nations.

The fourth report was given by Henriette Avram, Director of the Network Development Office at the Library of Congress, during which she pointed out that LC's acquisitions and cataloguing program has to some extent prolifereated the use of foreign information. Her second topic dealt with the importance of standards, and that there should be no division between library and information services. And finally,

Ms. Avram indicated that international copyright is of high importance and difficulty; she stressed that the private sector must be compensated for its information collection and dissemination efforts.

An exposition of library and information services available to the handicapped was presented by Kurt Cylke, Director of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (Library of Congress). He observed that the most sophisticated information systems to serve the handicapped exist abroad, and that our Nation needs to be made aware of such technological advances.

The sixth and final report was made by Frank McGowan, Director of Acquisitions and Overseas Operations at the Library of Congress, who described two programs which focus on U.S. libraries that might have relevancy to the White House Conference because of their emphasis on acquiring publications from abroad for use by American scholars and furnishing catalogues of foreign material.

In addition to these focal points, a number of related issues were identified during the subsequent general discussion, including:

- o support of the Florence Agreement proposed addendum to eliminate tariffs from publications, audio-visual materials, microfilms and special items for the handicapped;

- o exemption of Canada from the manufacturing clause of the Copyright Act of 1976, allowing American authors to publish their books first in Canada if they so desire;
- o international standardization affecting the free flow of information, including U.S. long-range financing;
- o recognition that international information flow is no longer an elitist function;
- o discussion of the need for tighter controls on technology transfer (and related information items).

A useful reminder was offered by Dr. Robert Wedgeworth, Executive Director of the American Library Association, who cited the importance of articulating the basics and significance of these international information issues for the attending WHCLIS delegates, specifically as they relate to United States' interests (as opposed to purely technical considerations). He went on to say that our Nation must make every effort to minimize the many problems involved in international information exchange, allowing other nations--particularly developing nations--to influence the process in ways not inimical to our country's interests. Illustrative of this approach is the importance of recognizing the hugh Latin American market for U.S. information products and the desirability of being responsive to known needs. In Mr. Wedgeworth's opinion, this is the kind of issue that the general public and the Conference delegates need to understand.

Throughout the May 22 planning meeting there were recurring references to the criticality of orienting the Conference delegates to the value of sustained, expanded information exchange with other nations, and the essential value of data received from abroad in coping with many major issues affecting all Americans. A concomitant point of emphasis was the importance attached by Congress to enhancing library and information services through the collection and improved availability of information to individuals and institutions.

The expressed consensus of the attendees favoring an enlarged follow-on meeting next led to the creation of a special task force composed of Dr. David Hersey (SSIE), Jane Bortnick (Congressional Research Service), and Dr. Jenny Johnson (International Division of American Educational and Communications Technology), which developed the structure, procedural guidelines, and a set of suggested topics for the July 31, 1979 meeting.

In designing the preconference WHCLIS one-day session, an intensive effort was made to ensure broad representation from among private sector institutions--universities, corporations, associations, foundations--and governmental groups (legislative and executive). Nearly 100 persons experienced and with special interests in this information realm met at

the Department of State on July 31 to exchange ideas, clarify salient issues in this complex area, and recommend program elements and priorities for the November White House Conference.

The overall rationale for devoting one of five Conference theme to the role of library and information services in fulfilling international responsibilities and maximizing the exchange of significant information was articulated by Charles Benton, NCLIS Chairman:

1. National policies must be formulated which insure a continued U.S. leadership role in creating, managing, and operating those information networks involving other nations, which are of potential benefit to American business and commerce.

2. Information increasingly is considered a resource and a "commodity" in many sectors of our society and by many other countries; it is imperative that the concepts and priorities of those charged with providing library and information services be heeded and reflected in relevant policies and programs.

3. There are international ramifications regarding such critical issues as "protection of privacy," safeguarding certain data, and "freedom of information" which are undeniable and whose resolution has to be undertaken by the best available talent.

4. The impact of information technology is universal, and hence its role in affecting library and information services demands an international frame of reference.

5. U.S. research libraries now receive 60 percent of their new material from foreign sources.

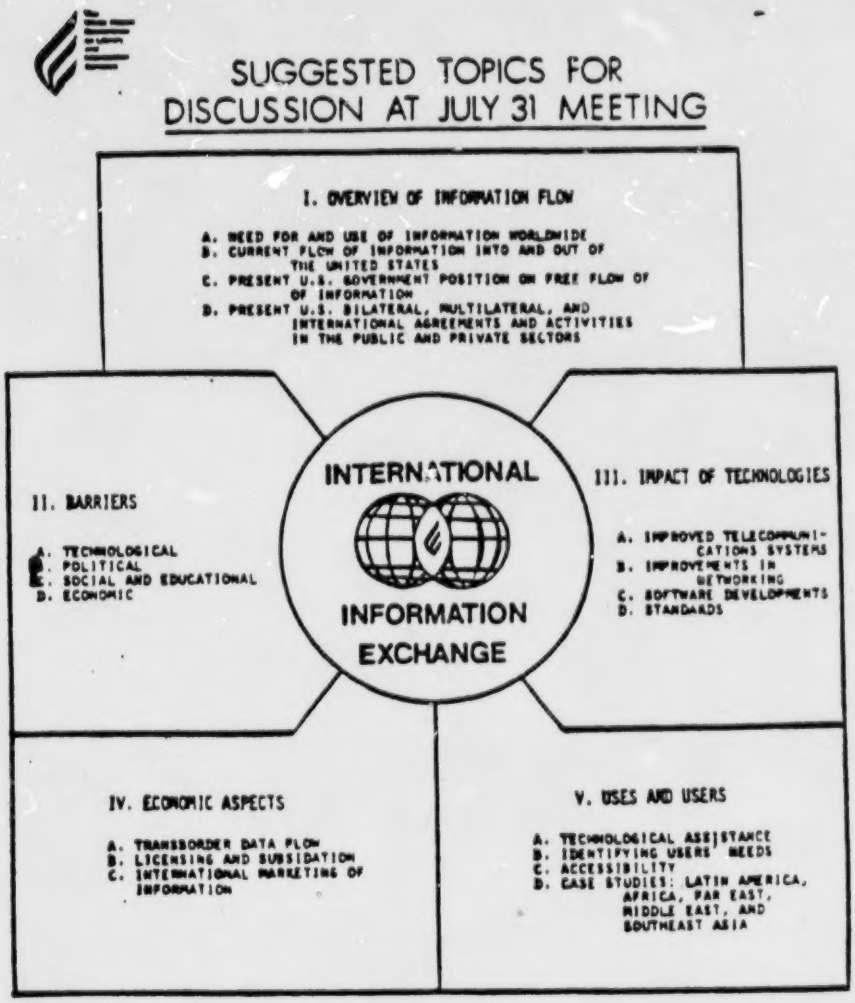
6. Global well-being and cooperation are more and more dependent on the development and sharing of critical information resources, including those employed in economic and social welfare planning, used to optimize agricultural production, established to cope with natural and man-caused disasters, or drawn upon to reflect important demographic trends.

Additional emphasis on these points was made by Marilyn Gell, WHCLIS Staff Director, who began by pointing out that one aim of the White House Conference "is to educate people a little bit about some of the issues with which they may be unfamiliar." She then noted that:

> ...your deliberations today will help us further identify those issues that are appropriate for discussion at the Conference in November, keeping in mind that our delegates are made up of one-third library-related and two-thirds citizen representation.

The importance of deriving "firm recommendations as to what program elements should be present in the November Conference" was underscored by Co-Chairman Robert Chartrand, Senior Specialist in Information Policy and Technology for the Congressional Research Service (Library of Congress). As a point of departure for the consideration of the five working groups, a series of suggested topics was prepared (see figure 1). Participation in these groups was voluntary, although group leaders, rapporteurs, and senior resource persons had been recruited beforehand in order to guarantee a responsive infrastructure and facilitate group action.

FIGURE 1


SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR
DISCUSSION AT JULY 31 MEETING
I. OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION FLOW
A. NEED FOR AND USE OF INFORMATION WORLDWIDE
B. CURRENT FLOW OF INFORMATION INTO AND OUT OF THE UNITED STATES
C. PRESENT U.S. GOVERNMENT POSITION ON FREE FLOW OF OF INFORMATION
D. PRESENT U.S. BILATERAL, MULTILATERAL, AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS
II. BARRIERS
A. TECHNOLOGICAL
B. POLITICAL
C. SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL
D. ECONOMIC
INTERNATIONAL
INFORMATION
EXCHANGE
III. IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGIES
A. IMPROVED TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS
B. IMPROVEMENTS IN NETWORKING
C. SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENTS
D. STANDARDS
IV. ECONOMIC ASPECTS
A. TRANSBORDER DATA FLOW
B. LICENSING AND SUBSIDATION
C. INTERNATIONAL MARKETING OF INFORMATION
V. USES AND USERS
A. TECHNOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE
B. IDENTIFYING USERS' NEEDS
C. ACCESSIBILITY
D. CASE STUDIES: LATIN AMERICA, AFRICA, FAR EAST, MIDDLE EAST, AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

The five discussion groups, each comprised of 12-20 experienced professionals, included:

Group I -- Overview on present state of international flow (Group leader, Melvin Day)

Group II -- Barriers to the transfer of information (Group leader, Louis Feldner)

Group III -- Impact of technologies (Group leader, Curtis Fritz)

Group IV -- Economic aspects of information transfer (Group leader, David Hersey)

Group V -- Uses and users of information internationally (Group leader, Richard Harris)

In developing their lists of specific issues and related recommendations for inclusion in the November program, the discussion groups were urged to focus on those international information exchange aspects which dovetailed most closely with the purpose and goals of the White House Conference. It was observed that there were many information-oriented issues on the international scene which were not germane to the deliberations of this milestone conference. Some of these were alluded to in the opening remarks by Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Pickering who stated that:

> An international dialogue of the information age is beginning to take shape with our friends overseas. That dialogue is beginning to uncover international issues of greatly increasingly complexity. Most of these issues are but still dimly perceived by all of us, but some of those now recognized concern the question of the effective management of the methods for raising productivity, stimulating economic program, and avoiding unemployment and minimizing worker displacement.

CHAPTER TWO: SUMMARIES OF DISCUSSION GROUP FINDINGS

Serving as chairman of the afternoon session which featured reports from the five discussion groups was Dale B. Baker, Director, Chemical Abstracts Service. The reports of the discussion groups included three major items:

1. A brief treatment of each issue identified for possible inclusion in the Conference program.

2. Specific recommendations offered by the discussants concerning those topics addressed within the purview of their respective working group.

3. Commentary featuring actual quoted material derived from the formal report of the group leader, supporting statements by group members, and subsequent questions or comments from the group-at-large as recorded during the final plenary session.

I. DISCUSSION GROUP 1: OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT STATE OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION FLOW

In Discussion Group 1 there was general agreement among the participants that international information dynamics and new information resources would dictate the directions that all countries must follow in their information systems' and library development. The group stressed that the United States has traditionally had a rather insular approach to information issues and what has been done on an international basis, in many cases, has been a byproduct rather than a principal objective of official U.S. efforts. The highlights and findings of the working group are presented below as a set of focal issues, salient recommendations, and associated commentary.

A. Issues

- the need to identify current international information/ communications policy issues which impact upon libraries and information services
- the importance of relating current U.S. policies--government and non-government--to information development worldwide
- the possible creation of a mechanism in the U.S. to coordinate government and private sector information/ communications policy to deal with major international information issues
- the encouragement and improvement of transborder data flows to the information "have not" nations
- the improved selection and maintenance of adequate collections of materials from international sources

B. Recommendations

1. The current information policies of the United States need reexamination, since most were developed at some time in the past and have not been updated.
2. The United States should encourage and facilitate information flows to less developed countries, not only from our Nation, but from others.
3. The flow of information has to be in both directions between the industrialized and less developed nations.
4. Information considered sensitive by the Government and private sectors should be dealt with separately, since the proprietary rights of the private sector are tremendously important to the economic well-being of the United States.
5. Modern information and technology from foreign sources should be analyzed and better employed to increase productivity and innovation in the United States.

C. Commentary

- The U.S. has traditionally made available overseas information produced by the Government or under Government contract; however, in other countries information produced for the government remains, for the most part, proprietary within the organization producing the information.

- Until recently, the United States has tended to ignore foreign technology. Today, many realize that in some areas foreign technology is equal to or better than ours and can be useful in enhancing productivity and innovation in the United States.

- There are a number of alternative mechanisms which might be recommended for coordinating international information policy. This is a problem which the Federal Government has not yet addressed in terms of its own information programs, much less in terms of a national perspective including the private sector.

- An increasing number of people around the world are taking steps to control the technologies that affect their lives--particularly in the U.S. through such things as technology assessment and social management of technology. Either there is something different about information technology vis-a-vis other technologies or people involved in information technolgy have not recognized the pervasiveness of this trend.

- It can be argued that information technology is not similar to many other technologies and a look at the tremendous growth and impact of information technology in all countries over the last ten years reflects this distinction.

- Too often in the creation of information systems and libraries the technology is considered first, instead of addressing what it is that the user wants.

- In order for the less developed countries to take advantage fully of the new information technology, they have to have an information infrastructure and trained information professionals capable of effectively accessing and processing needed materials.

II. DISCUSSION GROUP 2: OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION FLOW

Discussion Group 2 cited several specific examples of legislation, conferences, commissions, and reports which provide a useful issue-oriented context for addressing potential barriers to international information flow. Included in these were the:

- United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development (UNCSTD);
- 1979 General World Administrative Radio Conference (WARC);
- French Government's report on computerization in society (Nora Report);
- Canadian commission report on transborder data flow (Clyne Report);
- Swedish Government's report on the vulnerability of a computer society;
- Brazilian licensing and nationalization programs for high technology;
- Proposed legislation to revise Title 44 of the U.S. Code involving information dissemination policies.

These items are illustrative of areas that can be viewed in terms of potential restrictions on international data flows and also point to the fact that the flow of information is a two-way dynamic -- both into and out of the United States. The group arrived at several key barrier issues, outlined recommendations for overcoming them, and provided additional commentary on the topic.

A. Issues

. the lack of both a national and international policy for information

. the absence of a central focal point for coordinating information activities within the United States

. the lag between technological developments and society's and government's responses to it

- the receipt of 60 percent of materials in U.S. research libraries from abroad
- the existence of various copyright, privacy, and data protection laws
- the lack of standards and understanding between industrialized nations and the less developed countries
- the growth of restrictions and special charges by foreign communications regulatory agencies

B. Recommendations

1. The United States needs to rethink its role in the new information world with the Government performing an ongoing policy process that is prospective rather than reactive.

2. Discussions should be initiated on the pros and cons of various types of organizations or mechanisms which can coordinate information activities.

3. Additional or improved clearinghouses and referral centers should be established (not necessarily by the Government).

4. Funding should be increased to improve information society literacy, to provide continuing education for orienting people at all levels toward the evolving technological society, and to enhance acquisitions from abroad.

5. National planning for research library resource development should be improved, along with establishing better mechanisms for gathering information from abroad.

6. International cooperation should be improved through agreements, treaties, and conventions and the United States should increase its input to international meetings concerned with drafting such documents. In the light of recent and forthcoming meetings, the United States needs to move quickly.

7. Educational and training programs for less developed countries need to be improved, along with an increase in awareness of cultural diversity.

8. Creative strategies for sharing technologies and information should be promoted.

9. The awareness of the Government and the public regarding potential restrictions on data flows should be increased and developments in this area should be tracked more closely by policymakers, program perronnel, and users alike.

C. Commentary

- A need exists to establish a clearinghouse of information for less developed countries because no one place exists in the United States where LDCs can come to seek guidance in locating needed information.

- It should be remembered that much of the activity in the area of information production and dissemination is carried on in the private sector without the support of government which implies that any policymaking efforts should include both the public and private sectors.

- The U.S. tends to view the free flow of information as something that is natural, and any barrier that is erected as something artificial, whereas some countries might see the free flow as the unnatural or undesirable situation.

- As the information age continues to expand, it becomes increasingly valuable to have a basic file of reliable statistics about the growth or lack of information processes around the world, including the flow of data between countries.

- The era when U.S. information production was predominant is ending and today there is a better balance of information production and resources throughout the world.

- In discussing international information flows it is important to recognize that international communications carriers play an important role along with the foreign communications agencies.

III. DISCUSSION GROUP 3: IMPACT OF CURRENT TECHNOLOGY ON INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Discussion Group 3 concurred with the belief that technology is changing faster than the American public is able to learn about what already exists. The point was made that social change

is technology-driven and thus in order for society to be "in control", society's awareness of what technology offers has to be increased. The group also emphasized that negative aspects of technology exist as well as positive ones, as when less developed countries have experienced frustration and disillusionment when the promises of technology have been unfulfilled. A variety of issue areas were enumerated along with several recommendations and related comments on the topic.

A. Issues

- the need to minimize the threat of technology, both to other countries and to this Nation, so that the technology can be employed to its full potential
- the possible impact of technology on either increasing or decreasing the availability of information internationally
- the importance of establishing standards to facilitate the free flow of information internationally, including efforts to overcome language barriers
- the improved introduction of information technology for bridging cultural gaps
- the value of capitalizing on new information technology to improve the U.S. economic standing internationally

B. Recommendations

1. Mechanisms need to be improved for networking public and educational libraries on a worldwide basis, and for enhancing the ability of libraries to become more economically viable.
2. Delegates to the Conference and the public-at-large should be educated concerning both the employment of modern technology in accessing information and the implications of its use.
3. In applying modern information technology, particularly in the less developed world, it is important to consider what is the most appropriate technology, as is done in the industrial field.

4. The United States should evaluate what types of information are wanted from abroad based on the needs of various kinds of users at the Federal, State, and local levels.

5. The types and volumes of transborder data flows should be evaluated in order to comprehend the areas where information transfer can be facilitated or should be restricted.

C. Commentary

- A dichotomy exists concerning the effect of technology on the individual. On the one hand, it can cause a loss of personal identity, while on the other hand it can provide more individuality by enabling the delivery of customized products and services.

- Since people are being educated in using new on-line retrieval systems containing information of recent vintage, they may be losing the larger historical perspective and some of the values represented by more classical scholarly education and research.

- The United States must address philosophically whether mechanisms to filter information coming into and going out of the country are desirable or whether the technology should be used instead to directly interact with people abroad.

- Resource sharing may create fewer, larger resource centers where people can have direct access to information, resulting in greater economies of scale but also adversely affecting the publishing industry.

- Resource sharing can mean sharing of the surrogate record, rather than the item itself, and thus may help libraries become more economically viable without negative effects on the commercial and scholarly publications sector.

IV. DISCUSSION GROUP 4: ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Discussion Group 4 highlighted the point that information is a valuable resource not only for the intellectual satisfactions it can provide, but because it is an economic commodity and a source of influence. Although the United States has traditionally supported the

concept of the free flow of information internationally, that flow is not free in economic terms and several kinds of costs are associated with it. The discussion group considered economic implications particularly in four categories: barriers, costs, benefits, and opportunities. Barriers include such things as regulatory restrictions, some foreign standards, and prohibitions of certain types of data flows. Costs specifically include tariffs, the expense to U.S. enterprises of the development of foreign networks and other competitive foreign resources, and the outlays by U.S. enterprises in doing business abroad (and thereby spreading their costs more broadly) within a context of increasing regulation and restriction. Particular issues emerged during the discussion, along with several recommendations, and relevant commentary from participants.

A. Issues

- the need to increase public awareness of the potential adverse economic effects of transborder data flow regulation for the individual or the group in the field who desires greater access to overseas information
- the importance of ensuring that access to foreign information is not lost in the legitimate effort to protect individual privacy and nations' sovereignties
- the importance of evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of standardization, primarily in terms of their economic implications for the United States
- the need to improve the relationship between the public and private sectors regarding the transfer of information and the related economics

B. Recommendations

1. The Government should increase Federal subsidization to allow for greater participation by U.S. groups--including the private sector--in international meetings dealing with transborder data flow.

2. The United States should be cautious in its participation in international standards agreements, particularly as they affect standards which currently are being employed for large U.S. information systems.

3. In discussing subsidization of information exchange, different approaches for improving access by developing countries should be explored.

4. The Federal Government should evaluate the need for a national policy organization--not necessarily made up solely of government people or agencies--which could decide policy concerning Federal information systems.

C. Commentary

- It should be noted that single issues cannot intelligently be isolated from their context. For example, concerns regarding restrictions on or openness of information flow cannot be addressed independently of privacy, security, economic and other concerns.

- Everyone in the information community--even at the small rural library level--is affected by the implications of international information issues.

- It is difficult to estimate the precise economic impact of regulatory controls or tariffs because such things as improvements in computer hardware and software may offset regulatory increases in the costs to users.

- In view of the dramatic developments in information processing and communications technology, transfer of information across borders is having an increasing effect on the economic well-being of our Nation and on the costs to U.S. users of library and information services.

- The United States has been an information-rich society, one vital source of its economic, educational, and research strength; however, potential developments may dispossess the United States of its control and ability to maintain these critical resources, unless a continuing awareness of and concern in the international area are ensured.

V. DISCUSSION GROUP 5: USES AND USERS OF INFORMATION INTERNATIONALLY

Discussion Group 5 identified several linking mechanisms that enable two-way exchange of information between the United States and other nations. Among these are:

- international agencies and their programs,
- bilateral government agreements,
- barter and "quid pro quo" exchanges between organizations (public and private),
- sale by information producing organizations, and
- "people to people" exchange programs.

The group discussed a wide range of topics relevant to the overriding question concerning the degree to which information exchange can enhance the foreign posture of the United States, while helping to meet the growing need for foreign sources of information. The discussants highlighted several key issues, made recommendations for action, and provided associated commentary.

A. Issues

- the need to better comprehend the existence, scope, and scale of the various information programs in operation
- the importance of understanding the impact of U.S. production and the export of information resources on U.S. users in terms of such things as access, costs, and benefits
- the improvement of statistics on the current inward flow of information from abroad which may be valuable to U.S. users
- the evaluation of information as a resource that can enhance U.S. foreign policy and the degree to which technical assistance should be provided to enable exploitation of information by less developed countries.

- the need to assess developing country information requirements as distinct from those of the United States and Western Europe in order to provide new specialized products and services which better serve the LDCs

- the possible creation of a national mechanism for reviewing and coordinating U.S. participation in international information programs, setting priorities, and evaluating benefits to this Nation.

B. Recommendations

1. Greater emphasis should be placed on making U.S. policies affecting participation in international information exchange programs prospective rather than reactive.

2. More should be done to publicize various activities where private citizens and organizations can assist in the international exchange of information.

3. More effective international "information about information" services are needed to identify relevant new products and services to various user communities.

4. The United States should examine its current and potential bilateral and multilateral information exchange programs, with a view to improving the acquisition of foreign source material relevant to programs addressing U.S. social, economic and strategic needs.

5. Increased efforts should be made to publicize the activities of international and regional organizations concerned with the advancement of library and information sciences and to stimulate professional interest and participation in international developments.

6. Delegates to the Conference should be provided with an insight to how the United States, as a supplier of information products, services, and technology, is viewed by foreign nations (and specific user groups) and the implications of this for this Nation's posture and policies abroad.

C. Commentary

- The United States is seriously lacking in its basic knowledge and awareness of cultural affairs, comtemporary affairs, and political affairs in foreign countries, while people in other nations are more knowledgeable about issues in the United States.

- Developing countries represent a special class of users for U.S. information products and services and numerous U.S. objectives are served by providing improved access to needed information by the LDCs.

- The United States currently has no specific technical assistance goals and few programs designed to provide information per se to developing nations. As a result, certain basic information needs and infrastructure requirements of LDCs tend to be overlooked in U.S. technical assistance programs.

- As a nation, the United States is ahead in the "technology" of information, but behind many other countries in the recognition of the social and cultural implications of the emerging "information society" or the "New International Communications and Information Order," as called for by the developing countries.

- There is an absence of a coordinated national program that defines and articulates United States information resources and programs that can be promoted as valuable commodities for exchange or which support foreign policy goals.

CHAPTER THREE: OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

Inherent in the findings and recommendations of the five discussion groups is an awareness, amply underscored in the identification of key issues and action options, of the complexities which shape and affect international information flow. While official government positions, where they exist, often are a strong if not overriding factor, the interests of multinational corporations and other private sector groups increasingly must be taken into account. The major issues identified during the course of the five discussion groups' deliberations are shown graphically in figure 2.

FIGURE 2

ISSUES	GROUP 1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3	GROUP 4	GROUP 5
Coordination of U.S. information policies with worldwide developments	X	X			
Creation of a mechanism for coordinating U.S. information policies	X	X		X	X
Improvement of information flows to less developed countries	X	X	X		X
Improvement of acquisition of foreign materials for U.S.	X	X		X	X
Overcome restrictions on international data flows		X		X	
Address problem of lag between technology and society's response to it		X			
Minimize threatening aspects of new information technology			X		
Assessment of the impact of technology on the availability of information			X		
Improvement of standards for facilitating international information flows		X	X	X	
Improvement of U.S. economic standing through use of information technology			X	X	
Identification of existing international information programs					X
Assessment of the impact of exporting information technology on U.S. users				X	X

Considering the focal areas of the five groups, it is not surprising that there is an overlap of emphasis in certain areas. The level of experience among the pre-conference attendees was such that their perception of critical, unsolved problems was manifested--often in a majority of the sessions--both in the identification of salient issues and related recommendations which could lead to improved conditions and international relationships. An examination of the purpose and objectives of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services vis-a-vis this listing of international issues is constructive in sorting out which of these issues are of greatest relevance to those who will participate in the conference. It would seem that the five priority issues which most closely meet the matching criteria include:

1. Coordination of U. S. information policies with world-wide developments
2. Creation of a mechanism for coordinating U.S. information policies
3. Improvement of acquisition of foreign materials for the United States
4. Assessment of the impact of technology on the availability of information
5. Improvement of standards for facilitating international flows

The master list of a dozen issues also should be kept in mind, since it represents a broader spectrum of international activities within the realm of information exchange and utilization that will,

in time, have to be addressed. Official cognizance of the need to formulate more definitive, responsive information policies has been reflected in the recent creation of an Institute for Scientific and Technological Cooperation, and the affirmation of Congress in the Foreign Relations Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1979 that the:

> United States Government should have a comprehensive policy regarding the various communications and information issues that have entered international discussions and should establish an effective mechanism by which to develop and coordinate United States policy on such issues.

The need to clarify the role of scientific and technical information in foreign policy was a featured section in the 1978 report by the Subcomittee on Science, Research, and Technology of the House Committee on Science and Technology entitled Scientific and Technical Information (STI) Activities: Issues and Opportunities. This committee print, in a comment that touches on the broader concerns of the White House Conference, points out that:

> As a result of modern technological developments, the ability to communicate on a global basis and to affect the potential for future economic growth has been enhanced.

Insight into the Department of State activities and attitudes related to international information exchange is provided in Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Pickering's speech during the pre-conference meeting, which is an appendix to this report.

The determination of an appropriate strategy for this Nation will result from an assimilation of many viewpoints and contributions, among which may be the recommendations of the White House Conference on Library and Information Services. It will be through initiatives such as these that international policies and programs facilitating the exchange of information can be effected, to the ultimate benefit of individuals and institutions in this country and around the world.

APPENDIX: PRE-CONFERENCE ON INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE
LUNCHEON SPEECH BY THOMAS R. PICKERING, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE,
BUREAU OF OCEANS, AND INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND
SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS

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Many have wondered what is the interest of the State Department in international information activities, and I would respond very quickly by saying that our interest is the interest of our government insuring the free flow of information. But one must then hesitate and say, yes, but aren't there a number of legislative and regulatory constraints on that activity.

And I would say that, yes, indeed, we in the international area live with perhaps the philosophical or the moral equivalence of the privacy act on the one hand and the freedom of information act on the other. And these tend, as questions of policy arise, to tear us as they tear many, in determining what viewpoint to take, what attitude or what decision to take in settling major issues in this area. And they do in a symbolic way indicate that as we deal with the free flow of information, we do and must continue to protect the privacy rights of individuals on the one hand and on the other hand, the right of society to know and to deal freely and openly with information as an important asset, as an important good, as an important commodity.

The issues in transborder data flow for us in the State Department are important, however new they are. And the options for our policies for the future are as bewildering as they are in many other areas that we here have to face. Our active concern about the flow of data internationally was aroused several years ago, when a number of European parliaments took steps to adopt legislation to protect personal data.

European privacy laws were drawn up in terms of protection against infringements involving automated data processing. They called for

special treatment for transborder data flows, and they gave vaguely defined powers to certain control commissions in their own countries. It was clear to us immediately that important United States commercial interests were at stake, as several American companies moved actively to call this to our attention.

At the same time, proposals were advanced, both in the Council of Europe and the OECD [Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development]--the developed states group--to draw up international conventions that would harmonize and in other ways cope with the international problems that arise from the conflict of national laws in this sector. The U.S. government itself was looking for ways to go beyond the 1974 act on federal records [Privacy Act of 1974] and, for several reasons, we were not ready to move very hastily into a fullblown international convention. We balked at European efforts to do so.

Our own position and the European position differ. They did then and probably still do now in several respects. To the Europeans, data processing and the use of computers, especially when combined with new international telecommunications methods, meant adopting a foreign technology and acceding to foreign domination of data communication and the information processing industry.

The Europeans recognized as well the revolutionary implications in the technology, and the effect that it is having on all economic activity. They wanted to employ computer communications for its obvious benefits, but they also saw some very compelling political and

nationalistic and economic implications that were not readily relevant to the United States and to Americans.

We on the other hand are basically seeking greater computer and communication usage in information flow. We share basic European interests in protecting privacy, but finding new opportunities at home and abroad for advancing the technology is overriding for us, in terms of our commercial interest. Our eyes are focused on ever-widening exploitation of the technology and its introduction and its application to new industries.

The difference thus between the internationalist attitude in the United States and the introspective attitude in Europe is evident, and official investigations of computer and information processing fields have borne this out. Numerous studies have been commissioned and carried out in Europe and the United States, and there is an important difference between them. The American studies are mainly directed toward solving the problems of application: in electronic mail, for instance, in electronic fund transfers or installing an automation-based Social Security system.

Even the Privacy Study Commission was vitally concerned about avoiding protections that would endanger the applications or encounter large compliance costs, in terms of information flow. The European studies, on the other hand, have been directed more at socio-political and national economic implications. They look into the impact on national security and national sovereignty, the impact on employment and national control of industry.

A recent French inquiry is a good example. It is essentially a look into how France can move fully into the modern computer age, the age of "informatique," as the French call it, without surrendering national ideals or permitting industrial invasions contrary to traditional French interests and values. Even today, the United States and European perspectives do remain quite far apart, and it's only a modest oversimplification to say that the U.S. views the status quo in commercial and business terms. Our interest is in seeing the status quo changed rather slowly and rather deliberately. We do not want to interrupt the advance and the exploitation of the technology at home or abroad. The Europeans, on the other hand, see the status quo in terms of a challenge to an array of domestic issues. They would like to revise the status quo to give them greater international control over the application of technology, particularly in its commercial ramifications.

Two years ago, Americans were hardly aware of the hardening attitude in Europe and other advanced nations in this area. Nevertheless, today, it's one of our more immediate and direct problems. The most immediate concern in these days is the fact that the Council of Europe has started serious work on a binding convention to deal with this problem, and has appointed a number of experts to look into it. We participated but we're not part of the organization and did not enter into the negotiations.

Instead, we proposed a more subdued alternative, in the OECD. This was an approach more congenial to our interests in avoiding a

highly protected regime in this area, and we began in the OECD to draft voluntary guidelines similar in application and enforcement to the codes of conduct which the OECD has adopted for investment and other economic issues. There were two issues that really made these guidelines somewhat more than simple to negotiate. One was the distinction between automated and nonautomated data, and the tremendous desire of the Europeans to focus only on the automated data. The second was the tremendous interest in the distinctions between personal and nonpersonal data, and our willingness to protect personal data as a matter of privacy, but our strong feeling that the movement of nonpersonal data should not be interrupted.

Turning to a different and more fundamental set of transborder data issue and concerns, the latter point that I mentioned--the personal data question--that we have been dealing with for the past two years in the OECD and in the Council of Europe is really only in this particularly difficult international area the tip of the iceberg. Fundamental issues of nonpersonal data are beginning to surface, as new data services are becoming available both for home and industry usage.

It would be shortsighted, I believe, to expect that nonpersonal data will not become increasingly a more troublesome source of international controversy in the coming decade. It is self-evident when one ponders the implications of complex national governmental controls over technological systems that do not differentiate essentially between personal and nonpersonal data, and that do not distinguish

whether data are corporate computations or production, financial or inventory records. For example, there are videotexted or facsimile news analyses offered for subscription sale.

The significance of prospective actions on international data flows appears in a very troublesome context. What are the prospective actions that I just referred to? Several are being voiced in parliaments and governments and executive offices and international forums around the world. These are the questions that raised the issues, such questions as, should data be traded as a product, should it be taxed and made subject to duties, like other assets that are sold in international commerce and moved between countries, should a nation regulate and control its foreign expenditures and its earnings on data as a check on its balance of payments? Should unemployment be alleviated by restricting international data flows, so local jobs in the processing industry, for example, will rise? Should national investment and capacity in data communications and related industries be favored by restricting data trade for outside processing? Should foreign corporations be restricted from processing data in their headquarters, wherever they might lie? To what extent should the foreign ministries of posts and telecommunications dominate the data computing industry?

Conversely, how much participation should private data communications be allowed? All of these are serious questions. They become more central, I think, and more germane when one thinks that today in Sweden, in a small city, the fire equipment is equipped with CRT's,

with readout oscilloscopes, which permit that fire department when it gets a call to a specific address to query the central data bank and ask to see a plan of the street, and the name and numbers of the occupants, and in some cases, perhaps even a plan of the dwelling. And it's astonishing to realize that the central storage facility and processing installation is in Cleveland, Ohio, for that particular mechanism.

While we believe the free flow of data is essential and important, the concerns are not hypothetical. There may be only isolated examples now, but they're troublesome because the trends that they indicate are serious and real. Conflict over service rates between foreign government ministries, which in many countries around the world regulate postal and telecommunications traffic, and American private data bank suppliers is becoming complex in this day and age. And new and more sensitive issues are already on the horizon, presented, for instance, as cable television with consumer data services comes into markets and governments must consider the conditions under which foreign suppliers are permitted to function in that area.

In dealing internationally with the issues of transborder data movements, the United States has clearly two sets of policy options. The first is to move boldly, taking the initiative, seeking to establish international rules of the game that will favor further application and the use of technology. The second set of options is to react as events follow their course and as other nations enact domestic legislation on computer and communications operations, to confront specific problems and issues as they arise.

Each strategy has its place, each strategy has advantages, and each strategy has some significant disadvantage. There is no universal formula for deciding when one or the other of these strategies is the right choice. To date, I think you will not be surprised to understand that the U.S. has followed very clearly the second, more pragmatic alternative.

In a new complicated area of international policy, where the issues are neither clearly understood, perhaps, nor quantitatively, accurately defined, deliberation has seemed to us the necessary prerequisite to forward movement. Our discussion with our European and Japanese friends show that other nations generally share this view and are uncertain themselves about moving on to consider a fullfledged international regime.

This is, I think, a short and necessarily rather an elliptical overview of some of the questions and problems we face in this area. But I hope one that's given you a better sense of feel for what we in the State Department believe is perhaps one of the newest, the most important, and certainly the most rapid-moving areas of our international preoccupations.